

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CAB-05 CIAE-00

DODE-00 DOTE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 FAA-00 L-03 SS-15

SP-02 PA-02 PRS-01 USIA-15 XMB-04 OPIC-06 AID-05

IGA-02 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /109 W

-----022568 012033Z /43

P 011216Z DEC 77

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8875

INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY ABUDHABI

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USDOC WASHDC

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DEPARTMENT PASS FAA FOR CARY AND CAGMICHAEL; EXIMBANK

JIDDA PASS RIYADH

COMMERCE FOR COHEN, HALE,MYERS;

BRUSSELS FOR FAA

ABU DHABI PASS DUBAI

ATHENS FOR RTDO

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR,ETRD ,BEXP ,LE

SUBJ: MIDDLE EAST AIRLINES (MEALPRESENT STATUS ,FLEET PLANNING,
AND LINES OF DEVELOPMENT

REF: BEIRUT 5725

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FOLLOWING IS DETAIL FOLLOW-UP TO REFTEL:

1. "MEA IN 1975 AND 1976." ALMOST COINCIDENTAL WITH THE
LEBANESE CARRIER'S ACCEPTANCE INTO SCHEDULED SERVICE OF THREE
NEW BOEING 747-200SL COMBI AIRCRAFT (MAY,JULY,SEPTEMBER 1975),,
THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR ERUPTED AND SEVERELY CURTAILED AND HAMPERED
THE AIRLINE 'S FINANCIAL AND TRAFFIC POSTURE,CULMINATING IN THE

EXTENDED CLOSURE OF BEIRUT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (BIA) FROM JUNE THROUGH NOV. 18, 1976. WITH ITS OPERATING BASE AND PRIME TRAFFIC SOURCE CLOSED OFF, THE AIRLINE WAS FORCED TO RESORT TO HEAVY CHARTER (HAJ/TEACHER AIRLIFT) AND LEASING OPERATIONS TO GENERATE A MODICUM OF CASH FLOW AND TO DEPLOY AT LEAST A PORTION OF ITS FLEET AND PERSONNEL. A DRASTIC BELT-TIGHTENING EXERCISE INVOLVED ALL EXECUTIVES AND EMPLOYEES "LENDING " HALF THEIR SALARIES TO THE AIRLINE (SINCE REPAID), AND THE CLOSING OF EIGHT ON-LINE STATIONS AND SIXTEEN OFF-LINE OFFICES. EXECUTIVE HEADQUARTERS WAS TEMPORARILY SHIFTED TO LONDON, MARKETING HEADQUARTERS TO PARIS, AND (THROUGH THE GOOD OFFICES OF GOF AND AIR FRANCE) ENGINEERING BASE FACILITIES AND STAFF TO PARIS ONLY. DURING THIS PERIOD, ONE BOEING 720-023B WAS DESTROYED IN THE AIR BY AN APPARENT ACT OF SABOTAGE AND ONE BOEING 720-047B WAS DESTROYED BY DIRECT HIT IMMEDIATELY SUBSEQUENT TO DEPLAINING PASSENGERS AT BIA. HOWEVER, WITH THE REOPENING OF THE AIRPORT NOV. 19, 1976, THE AIRLINE REESTABLISHED ITS HEADQUARTERS AND ENGINEERING BASE AT BIA AND COMMENCED ITS SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS TO RESTORE MEA TO ITS POSITION AS THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN BASIN'S PREEMINENT SCHEDULED AIR CARRIER.

2. FINANCIAL RESULTS:

"YEAR"	"NET PROFIT(LOSS)"
1973	32,656,000 LEBANESE POUNDS
1974	35,514,000 " ""

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1975	(14,000,000 LEBANESE POUNDS)
1976	(69,156,000 " ")
1977(FIRST 9MONTHS)	8,902,000 " "
1977(FULL YEAR EX-	18,000,000 " "

TRAPOLATED)

CASH POSITION:

AUG.30,1977	194 MILLION " "
NOV.14, 1977	220 " "

3. TRAFFIC RESULTS: (000)

REVENUE TON KILOMETERS	1973	1974	1975
198,502	221,860	224,502	
AVAILABLE TON KILOMETERS	400,972	448,090	552,087

LOAD FACTOR	49.5PERCENT	49.5PERCENT	40.7PERCENT
	(000)		

1974	1977	PERCENT VARIATION
-----	-----	-----

(1ST 9 (1ST 9 1977 VS. 1974
MONTS) MONTHS)

REVENUE TON KILOMETERS 167,199 144,715 (13.4)

AVAILABLE TON KILOMETERS 328,501 285,554 (13.1)

LOAD FACTOR 50.9PERCENT 50.7PERCENT -0.2PIOINTS

4. PRESENT FLEET INVENTORY:

A. IN MEA SCHEDULED SERVICE : SEATING CONFIGURATIONS

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TWO BOEING 707-320C 18 FIRST CLASS PLUS 134 ECONOMY :152
TWELVE BOEING 720-023B 18 FIRST CLASS PLUS 105 ECONOMY:123
THREE BOEING 720-047B 18 FIRST CLASS PLUS 105 ECONOMY :123
ON ORDER : ONE BOEING 720-047 B DELIVERY APRIL 21, 1978
LEASED OUT: TWO BOEING 747-200SL 48 FIRST CLASS PLUS 322 ECONOMY :370

ON WELEASE, INCLUDING FIFTEEN FLIGHT CREWS AND CABIN STAFF,
TO MAY 3, 1979 TO SAUDIA (FOR SCHEDULED DEPLOYMENT RIYADH-LONDON
RIYADH-JIDDA-CAIRO).

ONE BOEING 747-200SL 48 FIRST CLASS PLUS 322 ECONOMY :370

ON DRY LEASE (EXCLUDING CREWS) TO APRIL 30, 1978 TO AIR FRANCE
(FOR SCHEDULED DEPLOYMENT IN LIVERY AIR GABON LIBREVILLE-
PARIS).

ONE BOEING 707-320C 18 FIRST CLASS PLUS 134ECONOMY :152

ON WETLEASE (INCLUDING FIVE FLIGHT CREWS AND CABIN STAFF)
TO MAY 31, 1979 TO SAUDIA.

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8876

INFO AMEMBASSY ATHEN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY ABUDHABI

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

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5. FLEET PLANNING: (PRIME SOURCE: DEPUTY CHAIRMAN NASR
NOVEMBER 14 MEETING).

MEA'S FLEET PLAN 1978-1985 WILL PROBABLY INDICATE
REQUIREMENT FOR FOUR ADDITIONAL BOEING 747-200SL COMBI
AIRCRAFT IN SERVICE BY 1985, BUILDING AIRLINE'S 747-200SL
FLEET TO SEVEN AIRCRAFT; AND TWELVE TO EIGHTEEN NEW INTER-
MEDIATE-SIZED WIDEBODIED MEDIUM-RANGE (CRITICAL SECTORS
BEIRUT-LONDON, BEIRUT-LAGOS/ABIDJAN) ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY
(SUPERCRITICAL WINGS, HIGH BY-PASS RATIO/LOW NOISE
LEVEL/LOW FUEL BURNOFF TURBOFAN ENGINES) AIRCRAFT TO MEET
TRAFFIC GROWTH, NEW ROUTE EXPANSION, AND 720-023B/
047B REPLACEMENT NEEDS. RCAA ESTIMATES VALUE OF THIS
REQUIREMENT FOR NEW AIRCRAFT AT DLR 576-DLR 744 MILLION,
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INCLUDING SPARES.

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN NASR BELIEVES NEW INTERMEDIATE SIZED
AIRCRAFT SHOULD BE AVAILABLE FOR INITIAL DELIVERIES TO
MEA BY SPRING 1981 (OR SPRING 1982 AT LATEST) AND SHOULD
OFFER 200-SEAT MIXED CONFIGURATION SEATING (20 FIRST CLASS
PLUS 180 ECONOMY SEATS) WITH TWO AISLES AND SEVEN TO EIGHT-
ABREAST SEATING, AND WITH THREE ENGINES. THIS DESCRIPTION
POINTS DIRECTLY AT BOEING /AERITALIA 7X7. HOWEVER, HE IN-
DICATES OTHER MEA PLANNERS (INCLUDING ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT
PLANNING MONSOUR BARDAWIL) ARE DEMONSTRATING INCREASINGLY
STRONG INTEREST IN AIRBUS INDUSTRIE'S A-300B4, PARTICULARLY

THE HIGHER WEIGHT (363,700 LBS.), LONGER-RANGE STAGE III VERSION (WITH FORECAST CAPABILITY OF UPLIFTING 269 PASSENGERS AND BAGGAGE OVER A 2860 NAUTICAL MILE SECTOR), PARTICULARLY IF BOEING/AERITALIA 7X7 IS UNAVAILABLE FOR DELIVERY BY 1981. NASR, HOWEVER, APPEARS AT LEAST PROVISIONALLY OPPOSED TO THE WIDEBODIED TWINJET CONCEPT FOR DEPLOYMENT ON FIVE TO SIX HOUR ROUTE SECTORS (I.E., BEIRUT-LONDON, BEIRUT-ABIDJAN, BEIRUT-LAGOS) AND BELIEVES THE 251-SEAT (NORMAL FIRST CLASS/ECONOMY CONFIGURATION) A-300B4 (ALONG WITH THE 277-284 SEAT MCDONNELL DOUGLAS DC10-10/30 AND LOCKHEED-CALIFORNIA L-1011-100/200 TRISTAR) IS TOO LARGE FOR MEA'S PARTICULAR REQUIREMENTS. NASR INDICATES HIS SOLUTION TO UNDUE DELAY IN 7X7 AVAILABILITY WOULD BE TO RESIST PRESSURES TO ACQUIRE A-300B4'S AND TO PLACE INTERIM ORDER FOR 150-SEAT BOEING ADVANCED 727-200 TRIJETS, DESPITE MISGIVINGS ON LATTER AIRCRAFT'S PAYLOAD/RANGE CAPABILITIES BEIRUT-LONDON AND, PARTICULARLY, BEIRUT-WEST AFRICA.

NASR PROVISIONALLY SKETCHES FORTHCOMING MEA 1978-1985 FLEET PLAN AS FOLLOWS:

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TOTAL AIRCRAFT IN SCHEDULED SERVICE

1978 1979 1980 1981 1982 1983 1984 1985

BOEING 747-200SL COMBI	1	3	3	5	5	5	7	7
INTERMEDIATE-SIZED								
(200 SEATS)	0	0	0	2	6	10	14	18
BOEING 707-320C	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
BOEING 720-023B/047B	16	16	16	14	12	10	8	6

NOTE: DURING 1978, TWO ADDITIONAL 747-200SL'S AND ONE ADDITIONAL 707-320C ARE IN MEA'S INVENTORY BUT ON WETLEASE TO SAUDIA.

WE NOTE, HOWEVER, FLEET PLANNER MONSOUR BARDAWIL'S EARLIER INDICATION OF THE FORTHCOMING FLEET PLAN AS FOLLOWS:

TOTAL AIRCRAFT IN SCHEDULED SERVICE

1978 1969 1980 1981 1982 1983 1984 1985

BOEING 747-200SL	1	3	3	5	5	5	7	7
INTERMEDIATE-SIZED	0	0	0	2	4	6	8	12
BOEING 707-320C	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
BOEING 720-023B/047B	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16

NASR'S FLEET PLAN ORIENTATION DIFFERS FROM BARDAWIL'S
 IN PROVIDING FOR ADDITIONAL INCREMENTS OF INTERMEDIATESIZED
 WIDEBODIED AIRCRAFT TO COMMENCE REPLACING THE OBSOLESING
 720-023B/047B FLEET (ACQUIRED USED FROM AMERICAN AIRLINES
 AND WESTERN AIRLINES) IN 1981 RATHER THAN 1986.
 MEA'S MANAGING DIRECTOR IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY RESPONSIVE
 TO EXPRESSED UNHAPPINESS FROM MEA PASSENGERS AND STOCKHOLDERS
 REGARDING COMFORT LEVELS OF THE 720-023B'S AND 720-047B'S.
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NASR IS SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING REFURBISHING CABINS OF THESE
 AIRCRAFT (AND ALSO POSSIBLY THE 707-320C'S) WITH NEW WIDEBODIED-
 LOOK INTERIORS (ENCLOSED OVERHEAD STOWAGE RACKS, SCULPTURED
 CEILING, DOWNWASHED SIDELIGHTING, GREATER HEAD AND ELBOW ROOM)
 SIMILAR TO THAT INSTALLED ON THE AIRLINE'S RECENTLY DELIVERED
 THIRD USED 720-047B (AND ALSO INSTALLED ON THE FOURTH USED
 720-047B ON ORDER FOR DELIVERY APRIL 1978).

6. MEA FLEET DEPLOYMENT WINTER 1977

BOEING 707-320C (TWO AIRCRAFT IN SERVICE; THIRD ON LEASE TO
 SAUDIA:

BEIRUT-LONDON SEVEN ROUNDTrips WEEKLY

BEIRUT-JIDDA THREE " "

BEIRUT-JIDDA-ADEN TWO " "

BEIRUT-JIDDA-KHARTOUM TWO " "

BOEING 720-023B/047B FIFTEEN AIRCRAFT IN SERVICE):

BEIRUT-CAIRO SEVEN ROUNDTrips WEEKLY

BEIRUT-DHAHRAN SIX " "

BEIRUT-PARIS SEVEN " "

BEIRUT-ZURICH-FRANKFURT THREE " "

BEIRUT-GENEVA-MADRID THREE " "

BEIRUT-ROME FIVE " "

BEIRUT-MILAN TWO " "

BEIRUT-ATHENS SEVEN " "

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8877

INFO AMEMBASSY ATHEN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY ABUDHABI

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

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FOUNDTRIPS WEEKLY

BEIRUT-GENEVA-FRANKFURT	ONE	"	"
BEIRUT-BENGHAZI	THREE	"	"
BEIRUT-ABU DHABI MUSCAT	THREE	"	"
BEIRUT-BU DHABI- RAS ALKHAYMAH	TWO	"	"
BEIRUT-ABU DHABI	TWO	"	"
BEIRUT-DUBAI	SEVEN	"	"
BEIRUT-BAHRAIN-DOHA	SIX	"	"
BEIRUT-BAGHDAD	FOUR	"	"
BEIRUT-ABIDJAN	ONE	"	"
BEIRUT-ANKARA	TWO	"	"

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BEIRUT-ISTANBUL	TWO	"	"
BEIRUT-AMMAN	SEVEN	"	"
BEIRUT-KUWAIT	SIX	"	"

NOTE: EFFECTIVE JUNE 1, 1978, MEA WILL DEPLOY ONE BOEING 747-200SL REPLACING 707-320C EQUIPMENT ON TWO ROUNDTrips WEEKLY BEIRUT-LONDON AND ALSO REPLACING 720-023B/047B EQUIPMENT ON ONE ROUNDTrip WEEKLY BEIRUT-PARIS, THREE ROUNDTrips WEEKLY BEIRUT-ABU DHABI-MUSCAT, AND ONE ROUNDTrip WEEKLY BEIRUT-DUBAI.

7. FLEET UTILIZATION - FIRST NINE MONTHS 1977:

AVERAGE DAILY UTILIZATION PER AIRCR

AFT

	YEAR-TO-DATE	SEPTEMBER ONLY
	-----	-----
BOEING 747-200SL	5.0	-- (NOTE 1)
BOEING 707-320C	8.7 "	7.8
BOEING 720-023/047B (NOTE 2)	6.2 "	6.9 HOURS

(NOTE 2) EXCLUDES THREE AIRCRAFT NEEDED FOR STANDBY AND ENGINEERING

(NOTE 1) ON LEASE TO AIR FRANCE (ONE AIRCRAFT) AND SAUDIA (TWO AIRCRAFT).

8. FORTHCOMING MANAGEMENT CHANGES

ON SEPTEMBER 28, SHEIKH NAJIB ALAMUDDIN, LONG-TERM MEA
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BOARD CHAIRMAN, SUBMITTED HIS RESIGNATION EFFECTIVE DECEMBER 2, 1977. ON THAT DATE, MEA WILL CONVENE A SPECIAL BOARD MEETING TO REELECT A NEW CHAIRMAN. BARRING POSSIBLE POLITICAL AND CONFESSIONAL HURDLES, STRONG SIGNALS APPEAR POINTED AT THE ELECTION OF ASAD NASR TO THE POST. WITH THE POST OF MANAGING DIRECTOR LEFT VACANT (IF NASR IS IN FACT APPOINTED CHAIRMAN), HE WOULD PROBABLY FILL THE VACANCY WITH A THREE-MAN TROIKA OPERATING COMMITTEE COMPOSED OF THE FOLLOWING MEA OFFICIALS: SALIM SALAAM, GENERAL MANAGER, INTERNATIONAL AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS (AND PRESIDENT, ARAB AIR CARRIERS ORGANIZATION); SALAAM IS ALSO A STRONGLY SUPPORTED CANDIDATE FOR THE POST OF CHAIRMAN). MOHAMED DOUAIDY, DEPUTY MANAGING DIRECTOR, CONTROLLER GENERAL. SAMI MOUSFI, DEPUTY MANAGING DIRECTOR, COMMERCIAL IN VIEW OF THE CONFESSIONAL FACTOR THAT MANIFESTS ITSELF IN LEBANESE GOVERNMENTAL AND QUASI-GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES, WE NOTE SHEIKH NAJIB ALAMUDDIN IS A DRUZE, ASAD NASR A GREEK ORTHODOX (AND PALESTINIAN BY BIRTH), SALIM SALAAM A SUNNI, SAMI MOUSFI A DRUZE, AND MOHAMED DOUAIDY A SUNNI. NASR INDICATES THE TROIKA MAY BE EXPECTED TO INCLUDE GEORGE CARAYAN, INDUSTRIAL ADVISOR TO THE CHAIRMAN, AND YOUSSEF LAHOUD, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT MARKETING.

RCCA NOTES NASR HAS PERFORMED BRILLIANTLY AS MANAGING DIRECTOR AND HAS BEEN THE CONSISTENT, LONG-TERM PRIME PROPONENT OF U.S. TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT ACQUISITIONS BY MEA, SUPPORTING THE MCCDONNELL DOUGLAS DC-8-62 AGAINST THE BAC SUPER VC-10 IN

1966 (ACQUISITION NEVER CONSUMMATED), THE BOEING 707-320C
AGAINST THE BAC SUPER VC-10 IN 1968, AND U.S. WIDEBODIED AIRCRAFT
AGAINST AIRBUS INDUSTRIE A-300B4 IN 1974.

WHILE SHEIKH NAGIB ALAMUDDIN'S RESIGNATION APPEARS UNEXPECTED
AT THIS TIME (WE UNDERSTAND HIS POST AS CHAIRMAN HAD BEEN RENEWED
FOR AN ADDITIONAL THREE YEARS THIS PAST SUMMER), ILLNESS
IN HIS IMMEDIATE FAMILY HAS REQUIRED CONTINUINGLY LENGTHIER
PERIODS OF ABSENCE FROM BEIRUT. THIS APPEARS AS THE RA-
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TIONALE FOR SHEIKH NAJIB'S DECISION TO RETURE AT THIS TIME.
ALAMUDDIN IS A DISTINGUISHED INTERNATIONAL AVIATION PERSONALITY,
SERVING FOR MANY YEARS AS A KEY MEMBER OF IATA'S EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE. HE HAS ALSO PROVED A RESILIENT AND BRILLIANT CHAIRMAN
GUIDING MEA THROUGH EXREME PERIODS OF ADVERSITY,
INCLUDING THE ARAB-ISRAELI WAR OF 1967, THE ISRAELI ATTACK
ON BEIRUT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT WHICH VIRTUALLY WIPED OUT
MEA'S FLEET IN DECEMBER 1968, AND THE RECENT LEBANESE CIVIL
WAR. ALAMUDDIN HAS ALSO HELD THE PORTFOLIO OF GOL MINISTER
OF PUBLIC WORKS AND TRANSPORT DURING TWO SEPARATE TERMS OF
OFFICE. SHEIKH NAJIB WILL BE APPOINTED HONORARY MEA CHAIRMAN
FOR LIFE IMMEDIATELY SUBSEQUENT TO HIS RETIREMENT.

9. MEA PROGNOSIS. GIVEN LEBANESE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC

STABILITY, MEA'S HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED STAFF,
STRATEGIC GATEWAY ROUTE STRUCTURE, AND TRACK RECORD IN
OVERCOMING ADVERSITY AND ATTAINING HIGH MARKET SHARE,
RCAA FORECASTS INCREASING PROFITABILITY AND RAPID TRAFFIC
GROWTH FOR THE LEBANESE CARRIER OVER THE FORSEEABLE FUTURE.
MEA SHOULD CONTINUE TO OFFER A MAJOR MARKET FOR U.S.
TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT MANUFACTURERS, DESPITE AGGRESSIVE
COMPETITION FROM AIRBUS INDUSTRIE. FROM 1988 TO DATE, MEA
HAS PURCHASED TWENTY FIVE U.S. TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT, VALUED
AT DLT 193.6 MILLION, WITH U.S. MARKET SHARE OF 100 PERCENT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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From: ROME
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Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
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Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 112275
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MIDDLE EAST AIRLINES (MEALPRESENT STATUS ,FLEET PLANNING, AND LINES OF DEVELOPMENT
TAGS: EAIR, ETRD, BEXP, LE, MEA
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/ccf1cefb-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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